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HOMEMAKERS' CHAT

WEDNESDAY, December 13, 1939

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

SUBJECT: "TIPS FOR FOOD-SHOPPERS." Information from the Bureau of Agricultural Economics, U.S.D.A. and the Consumers' Counsel, A.A.A.

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Once again here are tips from the U. S. Department of Agriculture for the housewife who buys the food for her family. Here are tips on supplies and prices of food now coming on the market. This information is to help you plan meals and get your money's worth when you buy food.

The 3 foods making headlines this month are poultry and eggs and milk.

Poultry makes news because more birds are selling now than at any other month in the year. As the economists put it, "poultry marketings reach their high point for the season in December and then fall off". But the opposite happens to eggs and milk this month. Eggs have reached their yearly low point and are now just starting to market in larger quantities. As for milk, this is the month when milk supplies are smallest of the whole year. But after the low point this month more milk will be coming to market from now until June. June is the big month for milk and April is the big month for eggs, while December is the big month for poultry.

The fruit that makes news this month, of course, is citrus fruit. Plentiful supplies of oranges, grapefruit and tangerines are due this month. In fact, more tangerines and more Florida oranges go to market in December than in any other month of the year. More grapefruit and California navel oranges also are coming to market this month. In Florida the orange crop is the largest on record. It is about 6 percent larger than the previous record crop of 1938. Not quite so many

tangerines, grapefruit and California navel oranges going to market this year as last, but a great plenty just the same. This year's grapefruit crop is the second largest on record. And the tangerine crop is above average.

So much for the news about citrus fruit. Now some news of fresh vegetables. The warmer States where vegetables grow at this time of year report fewer snap beans, cucumbers, eggplant, spinach and kale this year than last. But they report more tomatoes and more celery and about the same amount of cauliflower, green peppers and carrots. Of course, the fall crops of these vegetables are only a small part of this country's big yearly supply of vegetables. During December cucumbers, eggplant, peppers, green beans and many tomatoes come in from other countries to add to those grown in our warmer States. Tomatoes from Cuba and elsewhere are the big vegetable import at this time of year.

Turkeys are still making news. Lots more turkeys on the market for Christmas this year than last. Once upon a time turkey meat was a holiday delicacy. Now turkeys have taken their place as one of the good foods for almost any month of the year. This year a lot of turkeys are going into cold storage because the record size crop brought more turkeys on the market than could sell fresh.

Speaking of turkeys, reminds me of meats coming to market this season. Spring pigs are going to market already. So your butcher will have plenty of pork for sale this month. Usually December is the big month for hog marketing but predictions are now that January will see more hogs on the market than December. Because of the large pork supplies in prospect this season, pork has taken its place among the official surplus foods. On December 15 pork goes under the Department-of-Agriculture's food stamp plan.

Here's news about lamb. The season for grain-fed lambs opens this month. And you can expect more lamb on the market for the next 5 months than last year during these months.

As for beef, the news is about the same, as reported in our last shopping tips. Total supplies of better and average-grade beef will be about the same as last year. During December not so much beef comes on the market as in November.

Now here's a little news about egg prices. More eggs are on the market now than a year ago. And the wholesale price of eggs has gone down in recent weeks as more eggs have come to market. Generally, egg prices begin to go down in November and continue dropping until April. April is the month when eggs are cheapest. Sometimes when a cold snap in the weather comes in December or January and the hens slow up laying or farmers can't get their eggs to market, then egg prices take a jump up for a week or so.

You may be wondering about food prices in general right now. Are prices higher than they were before the war started abroad? Wholesale prices are about 8 percent above pre-war prices. Of course, most food prices have dropped since that first flurry of price rises in September. The most noticeable drop in wholesale prices has been in fresh pork, lard, sugar and dried beans. All these foods went up in price in September and then came down again. The wholesale price of flour has also gone down since September but it is still around 70 cents more a barrel than it was before the European war started.

Now let's just run over the foods to remember for your market list this month. Here they are: poultry, especially turkeys; citrus fruit, especially grapefruit and Florida oranges; tomatoes and celery probably also cauliflower, green peppers and carrots; and last but not least pork and lard.

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